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BETA ACTIVITY TEMPLATES

For Your Most
Insightful
Results Ever!



Introduction

As your beta test approaches, you've likely covered the basics:

- Recruited your target market testers—check.
- Mapped out your testing schedule—check.
- Identified the features to be tested—check.
- Planned how you'll guide testers in evaluating those features...?

This is where clear and user-friendly instructions make all the difference. While your team may be familiar with the technical details, testers approach your product from a different perspective. They need guidance that's easy to understand and follow.

Even with the most enthusiastic testers, unclear or overly technical activities can lead to minimal feedback, inconsistent data, and insights that aren't actionable. Writing effective activities doesn't require rocket science, but it does call for empathy, creativity, and a focus on clarity.

For over 20 years, Centercode has empowered companies to deliver better products by providing them with powerful tools to turn feedback into actionable insights. With thousands of successful beta tests run on the Centercode platform, we've developed key processes to make testing more efficient and more effective. We're excited to share that experience with you with this guide on crafting effective beta test activities for your most insightful test ever.

This guide is here to help you craft activities that drive high participation, generate valuable feedback, and provide actionable insights. Whether you're a seasoned pro or new to beta testing, you'll find tips and templates designed to make your activities clear, engaging, and effective.

LET'S DIVE IN AND ENSURE YOUR BETA TEST IS SET UP FOR SUCCESS!

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Powerful Insights From Purposeful Activities

In order to become the GOAT at writing test activities, you first have to understand why activities are important and how they influence the quality of your data.

Activities are important because they direct your testers' attention and product usage to the experiences you're trying to learn more about. For a beta test to surface bugs and usability issues that could disrupt your audience in real life, you need to assign activities that **mimic natural, normal use as closely as possible.**

Here are two example activities for testing the volume control of wireless headphones.

ACTIVITY A:

While listening to music, use the volume control to turn the sound up as loud as it will go.

ACTIVITY B:

While listening to music in a busy public space, adjust the volume until you can hear clearly.

Both activities encourage the tester to use the volume control. **But Activity B is likely to net more specific, usable feedback because it's closer to a real-world scenario.**

ACTIVITIES ALSO HAVE A LOT OF INFLUENCE ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR DATA

Well-written activities stimulate tester participation and feedback, even surfacing insights about your product you weren't aware of. Meanwhile, a single, poorly written activity can tank your testers' focus, leading to damage control, rabbit holes, and wasted energy (yikes).

Anatomy of a Beta Test Activity

Creating an effective beta test activity is a bit like crafting the perfect recipe—each ingredient has to be just right to get the best results. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting out, understanding the anatomy of a beta test activity will help you cook up clear, actionable tasks that your testers can easily follow. Let's break down the key components that make up a well-structured activity.

Start With a **Verb**

Why it matters: The verb is the driving force behind your activity. It sets the action in motion and tells your testers exactly what you need them to do. Think of it as the spark that ignites the whole process.

> **Activate** the noise-canceling feature on your headphones while commuting to work.

The verb clearly sets the action in motion, instructing the tester on exactly what to do.

Focus on the **Feature**

Why it matters: Testers need to know where to focus their attention. Highlighting the feature ensures they're zeroed in on the part of your product that needs feedback. This is your spotlight, shining on the exact area you want to explore.

> Adjust the **brightness levels** on your smart lighting system during different times of the day.

Here the specific feature ("brightness levels") tells testers the exact functionality that needs evaluation, avoiding distractions.

Specify the **Environment**

Why it matters: Context is key. Whether it's a physical location or a specific part of your product, the environment sets the stage for the activity. It's like giving your testers a map with a big "You Are Here" marker, so they know exactly where to be.

> Send a text message using voice commands while **in a noisy room with multiple people talking.**

This environment ("a noisy room with multiple people talking") sets a specific context that mirrors real-world use cases, ensuring that the feedback reflects how the product performs under typical conditions.

Set a **Duration** (if necessary)

Why it matters: How long or how often testers engage with a feature can be crucial. Specifying the duration ensures everyone is aligned. If time isn't a factor, you can skip this part.

> Monitor the battery life of your smartwatch over a **full 24-hour period,** using it as you normally would.

Specifying a duration ("over a full 24-hour period") ensures consistency in how testers use the product, which is essential for comparing results across different users.

Here's a simple template to help you draft your activities

Verb | Feature | Environment | Duration (if needed)

EXAMPLES:

Adjust the thermostat temperature using the mobile app while away from home.

Host a video conference and share your screen for 15 minutes.

Log your meals and exercise throughout the day using the Daily Activity Tracker in the mobile app.

Pair your wireless headphones via Bluetooth connection to your smartphone.

Common Anatomy Pitfalls to Avoid

Vague Verbs - Steer clear of verbs that don't convey a clear action (e.g., try, check, explore, look at, test, use). Instead, use action-oriented words such as "send," "adjust," or "trigger" to leave no room for confusion.

Overloading Information - Testers can only handle so much at once. Focus on one objective per activity to keep things manageable and prevent overwhelm.

Unclear Environments - If your testers are unsure of where to go, their feedback might miss the mark. Be precise in defining the environment.

Varying Activity Structure for Engagement

While it's essential to include the key components of an activity—**Action (Verb)**, **Focus (Feature)**, and **Context (Environment)** (and **Timing (Duration)** if needed)—in every task, you don't always have to follow the same order. To keep testers engaged over longer periods, consider occasionally varying the structure.

FOR EXAMPLE: Instead of "*Adjust the thermostat temperature using the mobile app while away from home,*" you might write "*While away from home, use the mobile app to adjust the thermostat temperature.*" This small change makes activities less repetitive while keeping them clear and focused.

Quick Activity Anatomy Checklist

- ☐ Does your activity start with a **strong, clear verb?**
- ☐ Have you **highlighted the specific feature** you want tested?
- ☐ Is the environment or **context clearly defined?**
- ☐ Did you **specify a duration** if it's relevant?
- ☐ Does the activity specify **what the tester should achieve or observe?**

By following this structure, you're not just creating tasks—you're guiding your testers down a clear path that leads straight to the insights you need. And when every activity is built on a solid foundation like this, you're setting yourself up for feedback that's not just plentiful, but also actionable and relevant. So, before you hit "send," make sure your activity checks all the boxes, and you'll be well on your way to beta test success.

The Do's of Writing Activities

Simplify - Fancy sentences make great literature, but they can confuse or slow people down. Help testers get to the point quickly with short and simple sentences. Use straightforward language, avoiding unnecessary jargon or technical terms (including product terms). Remember: the goal is to make your instructions as easy to follow as possible.

Format - It's painful to admit, but most people don't read—they scan. **Use strategic formatting** (see where we're going with this?) to increase scannability and draw attention to the most important parts of your activities, a.k.a. the verb and the feature. Also, avoid bolding/underlining the whole thing. To paraphrase a famous line from *The Incredibles*, when everything's important, nothing is.

Define done - To successfully complete an activity, your testers need a crystal-clear definition for what "complete" means. Give your activities a clear end point. This can be as simple as saying "Complete product setup" or "Log out and log back in to confirm you've set up your account."

The Don'ts of Writing Activities

Overloading - Our testers are like grocery bags—overload them, and they'll break. They can only handle a certain amount of information or tasks at once. If a single activity is too much, they might feel overwhelmed, leading to incomplete or inaccurate feedback. Keep what you ask for manageable. In our experience, that's about 1 to 2 hours of testing a week.

Overexplaining (or under explaining) - Activities should give enough information to get a task done, and that's it. Too much instruction turns testers into bots, while too little can result in incomplete feedback. What you say depends on the type of activity you're writing, but generally, give the same level of detail your customers would receive.

Oversteering - It's tempting to create a very specific activity to answer a particular question. But beware: this approach can overemphasize a single detail and misrepresent its importance to the overall user experience. Instead, think in everyday terms—consider how a customer would naturally encounter this situation and design your activity to reflect that.

EXTRA TIP: When asking for feedback, first ask testers to confirm they've completed the activity!

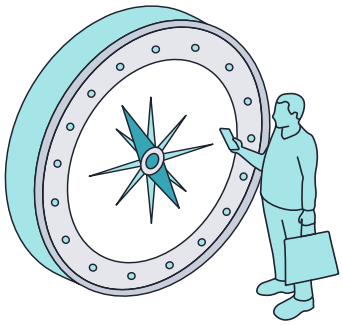
Types of Beta Test Activities

All activities require the tester to do something. A perfect activity, however, engages your testers with the feature or product experience in a way that promotes organic usage and encourages feedback. Depending on what you need to test, this can be really straightforward or...require some creativity.

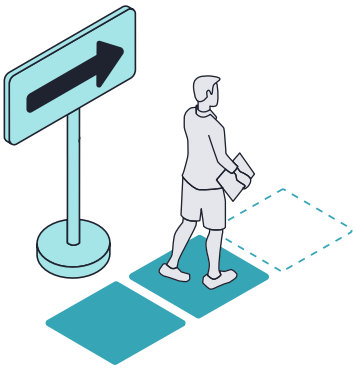
Both the **feature you're testing** and the **questions you need answered** will inform what kind of activity you put in front of your testers. But since different questions require different scenarios to answer them, you can't write all your activities the same way.

Don't crack open that aspirin just yet! We've analyzed and broken down the most common activity types, and included identifiers and examples for each one. Using these guidelines, you'll have the chops to design activities that net plenty of feedback, no matter what you're testing.

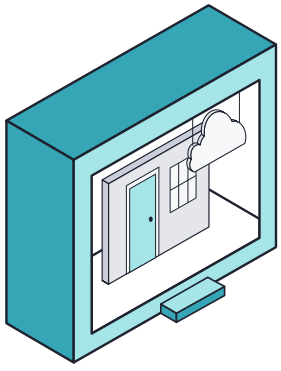
BETA ACTIVITY TYPES



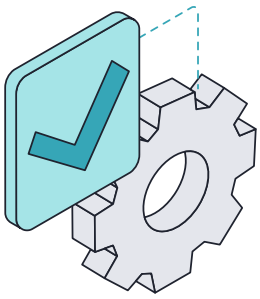
EXPLORATORY



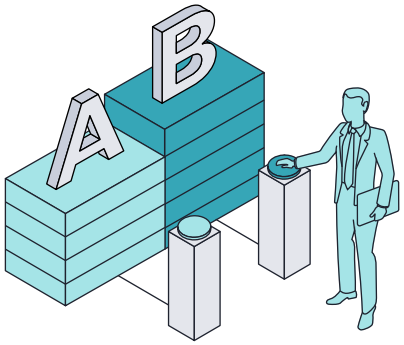
PRESCRIPTIVE



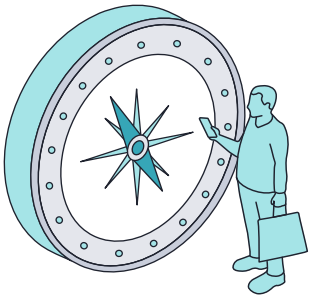
SCENARIO



PROJECT



COMPARATIVE



Exploratory Activity

Exploratory activities are all about giving testers the freedom to navigate a feature or experience with minimal guidance. This open-ended approach is ideal for gathering genuine feedback. It helps you collect general impressions without steering the outcome.

CONSIDER AN EXPLORATORY ACTIVITY IF...

- **You're in the early stages of testing a feature.** If you're still gauging how users interact with a new or complex feature, exploratory activities allow testers to freely navigate and provide unbiased, organic feedback.
- **You don't have a defined outcome in mind.** Use exploratory activities when you're uncertain about specific pain points or areas that need focus, and you want to discover potential issues or insights naturally.
- **You want to observe unfiltered user behavior.** If you want to see how users naturally engage with a feature, without being guided or prompted, exploratory activities help capture authentic, real-world interactions.

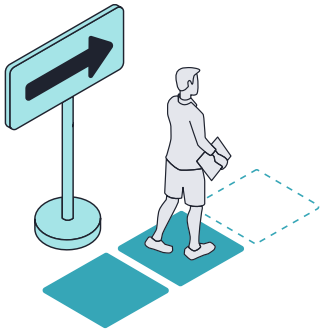
EXAMPLE

Product: Mobile app

Feature: Account creation

Activity Instructions:

Create a new user account in the app.



Prescriptive Activity

Prescriptive activities guide testers step-by-step, ensuring they follow a specific process. This approach is ideal for gathering focused feedback on particular tasks, especially after rolling out a bug fix or an update.

CONSIDER A PRESCRIPTIVE ACTIVITY IF...

- **You need to test the effectiveness of a specific feature or process.** Prescriptive activities are ideal when you need testers to follow exact steps to validate whether a particular function works as intended, especially after a bug fix or update.
- **You're assessing usability and user flow.** If you want to ensure that a process is intuitive and users can complete it without confusion, prescriptive activities allow you to evaluate specific areas in detail.
- **You need to verify expected outcomes.** Use this activity type when you need to ensure users are achieving the expected results, like successfully completing a sign-up process or configuring a setting.

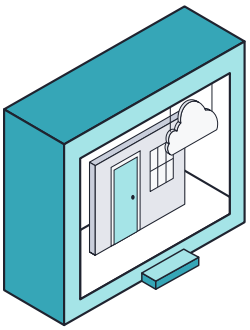
EXAMPLE

Product: Mobile app

Feature: Account creation

Activity Instructions:

1. Open the app
2. In the settings page, tap **create a new account**
3. Fill out your contact information, using the auto-fill function to add your home address
4. Add an avatar
5. Tap **save**



Scenario Activity

Scenario activities immerse testers in real-world situations during testing. By simulating these scenarios, you can see how your product performs in its intended environment. Plus, it's a great way to refresh tester engagement with creative, context-driven tasks.

CONSIDER A SCENARIO ACTIVITY IF...

- **You need to replicate real-world conditions.** Scenario activities shine when you want to test how a feature performs in the environments or situations it's designed for. Whether it's assessing GPS tracking during a 5-mile run or testing sound quality in a noisy café, this approach immerses testers in a realistic setting, ensuring their feedback reflects real-life usage.
- **You want to engage testers with both context and task.** Scenario activities are unique in that they don't just ask testers to complete a task—they immerse them in a context. This dual focus encourages testers to think critically about how the environment affects the feature, leading to richer, more insightful feedback that captures the nuances of real-world use.
- **You're testing complex or multifaceted features.** When a feature interacts with various elements or requires specific conditions to be accurately tested, scenario activities are invaluable. They allow you to observe how different factors influence the feature's performance, revealing dependencies or hidden issues that might not surface in a more controlled test.
- **Engagement has plateaued.** If testers seem disengaged, a well-crafted scenario can reignite their interest. By introducing a creative, story-driven context, you can transform routine testing into a more dynamic and enjoyable experience, which can lead to more enthusiastic participation and more detailed feedback.

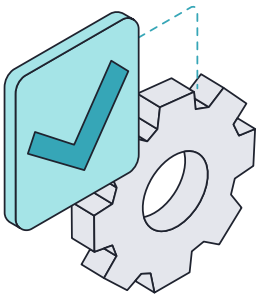
EXAMPLE

Product: Connected Grill

Feature: Temperature Probes

Activity Instructions:

Invite guests over for dinner and grill some steaks. While you're preparing other dishes or mingling with your dinner guests, monitor the temperature of the steaks in the mobile app using the connected temperature probes.



Project Activity

Project activities are tasks testers need to do for the sake of your beta test. Think of them as admin work—they aren't related to your product, but your test won't run without them. For example, your testers may need to install a program to access the beta version of your mobile app. Building these activities into your plan ahead of time will help you avoid unnecessary delays and confusion later (trust me on that).

CONSIDER A PROJECT ACTIVITY IF...

- **You need to prepare testers for the main activities.** Project activities are essential when there are preparatory steps that testers must complete to ensure the smooth running of the beta test, such as installing software or setting up devices.
- **You're setting the stage for feature-specific testing.** Use project activities to handle all the setup tasks that might otherwise distract testers from the main testing objectives, ensuring they can focus fully on the features being tested.
- **You want to ensure uniform testing conditions.** To maintain consistency across all testers, project activities help make sure everyone is starting from the same setup, reducing variability in the results.

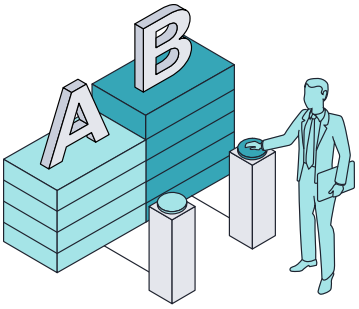
EXAMPLE

Product: Mobile App

Feature: Getting Started

Activity Instructions:

Download TestFlight from the App Store to access the beta app.



Comparative Activity

Comparative activities ask testers to compare your product against a competitor's or assess the same feature across different scenarios. This approach helps pinpoint your competitive advantages and highlights areas where you can improve.

CONSIDER A COMPARATIVE ACTIVITY IF...

- **You're benchmarking against competitors.** Comparative activities are crucial when you need to understand how your product stacks up against others in the market, helping to highlight competitive advantages or areas for improvement.
- **You're assessing performance across different environments.** Use comparative activities to evaluate how a feature or product behaves under varying conditions, such as different network speeds, device types, or user scenarios.
- **You're looking to identify unique selling points (USPs).** These activities help uncover what makes your product stand out by directly comparing it to alternatives, providing insights into what resonates most with users.

EXAMPLE

Product: Connected toothbrush

Feature: Everyday usage

Activity Instructions:

Compare your experience using the connected toothbrush to your regular toothbrush. Note any differences in effectiveness, convenience, and overall satisfaction.

Capturing the Results of Beta Activities

Activities are more than just tasks—they're opportunities to gather actionable insights from testers. After testers complete an activity, it's crucial to capture their thoughts and experiences in a way that aligns with your goals. **Here's a list of methods for collecting insights from testers once they've finished a task:**

TALKING HEAD RECORDING: Ask testers to share their thoughts through a quick video using their webcam or smartphone. This lets them elaborate on their thoughts, while you gain the added context of their facial expressions.

SCREEN RECORDING: Request that testers record their screen while they complete the activity. Think of it as a mini usability study where you can see exactly how they interact with your product and navigate their tasks.

FORUM THREAD: Encourage testers to share their insights in a forum thread. This approach can help you collect individual feedback, and also foster interaction among testers, leading to richer, more diverse insights.

INTERVIEW: Schedule calls between your testers and your team to dive deep into their experiences. This can provide rich, qualitative feedback, but requires significant time investment from both sides.

RATING SCALE: Prompt testers to submit their opinion using a simple rating scale, often focused on aspects like satisfaction or ease of completing an activity. It's a quick and straightforward way to gauge their experience.

SURVEY: Provide testers with a survey following their activity to gather targeted feedback, especially if your team has specific questions in mind. Well-written questions help you capture testers' opinions on multiple aspects of the activity.

FEEDBACK FORM: Invite testers to provide detailed input on issues, ideas, or praise related to their activity using structured feedback forms. This is one of the most effective ways to collect data about a tester's experience.

EMAIL RESPONSE: Allow testers to reach out to you through email to provide details about their experience. While this method comes with its own set of challenges, it's a better option than not gathering data at all.

Choosing the right method to collect feedback depends on the type of information you need. The activity's purpose, your project's objectives, and the resources at your disposal will all guide your decision. To help, we've created a quick guide to selecting the best method for gathering insights from your testers.

Avoiding Bias In Your Activities

Because we're human (for now anyway), our opinions creep into what we say. But biased activities can skew what your testers think, affecting the feedback they give and the data you act on. Whether it's an engineer who's very passionate about a certain "cool" feature that hasn't come up in feedback yet, or product designers trying to settle an argument, stakeholders can be so excited to see what they want to see that they accidentally (or intentionally) propose biased activities.

UNBIASED EXAMPLE "Complete the checkout process"

Confirmation bias

"Complete the checkout process, noticing how convenient and streamlined it is"

This leads testers to focus on and affirm its convenient or streamlined aspects.

Reciprocity bias

"Complete the checkout process and let us know how we can improve. Your positive feedback is incredibly valuable to us, and we appreciate your effort in helping us."

While it's nice to express gratitude, emphasizing the need for positive feedback can make testers feel pressured to be overly positive.

Begging the question

"Complete the enhanced checkout process"

This assumes the checkout process is enhanced without room for independent assessment.

Loaded question

"Complete the checkout process, noticing improvements over the previous version"

This implies that the new version is better than the previous one.

Double-barrel question

"Complete the checkout process and update your shipping address if necessary"

This instruction asks testers to assess two separate experiences, leading to potential confusion or incomplete feedback.

Either-or fallacy

"Complete the checkout process, noting whether it's intuitive or confusing"

This only presents two options, ignoring the possibility that testers may feel neutral or mixed about the experience.

Tips to Maintain Neutrality & Clarity

In addition to the specific types of bias covered earlier, there are some general practices to keep in mind when writing your beta test activities. These tips can help you avoid unintentionally influencing feedback or causing confusion:

USE NEUTRAL LANGUAGE - Stick to factual descriptions and avoid adjectives that imply a judgment, such as “smooth,” “flawless,” or “improved.”

Example: Instead of “Test the smooth interface,” use “Test the interface.”

AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS - Don’t assume the outcome or performance of a feature. Instead, ask testers to report on their experience without leading them.

Example: Instead of “Notice how quickly the app loads,” use “Open the app.”

BE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC - Avoid vague terms like “expected” or “usual,” which can be interpreted differently by each tester. Provide clear criteria or definitions when necessary.

Example: Replace “Check if the menu flyout works as expected” with “Open the menu and access ‘Configuration’ using the flyout menu from ‘Settings’.”

SEPARATE TASKS TO PREVENT CONFUSION - Give testers one clear instruction at a time. Combining multiple tasks into one activity can lead to incomplete feedback or overlooked issues.

Example: Instead of “Complete the setup process and update your profile,” separate it into two distinct tasks: “Complete the setup process,” and, “Update your profile.”

By following these general tips, you can help ensure that **your activities remain neutral and clear**, leading to more reliable & actionable feedback from your testers.

Checklist For Writing Ideal Beta Activities

You've trained hard and mastered the fundamentals—now you're just about ready for the big leagues! Use this checklist to ensure you're batting a thousand when writing activities.

DOES YOUR ACTIVITY:

- [ ] Start with a verb?
- [ ] Focus on a single feature or experience?
  - [ ] Mention that feature or experience in the activity?
- [ ] Give testers the test environment or location?
- [ ] Give testers the necessary duration or frequency (if applicable)
- [ ] Use simple sentences?
- [ ] Have clear criteria for completion?

MAKE SURE YOU'VE REMOVED:

- [ ] Technical terms and jargon (including internal product jargon)
- [ ] Biased language, such as
  - [ ] Easy/difficult
  - [ ] Too much/too little
  - [ ] High/low quality
  - [ ] Obviously or clearly
- [ ] Subjective framing that could present features in a biased way
- [ ] Hinting at a preferred outcome

Beta Test Activity Templates

Congrats on mastering the art of crafting perfect activities! But why reinvent the wheel? These ready-to-go templates give you dozens of activities for reliably testing all kinds of products. Copy them directly or use them as a jumping off point to more thorough beta testing and higher-quality, more actionable feedback.

DOWNLOAD ACTIVITY TEMPLATES NOW

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USE CASES:

- Beta Tests
- User Acceptance Tests
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PRODUCT GROWTH

Recruit **Existing Customers** to continuously mature live products and services

USE CASES:

- Progressive Delivery
- Early Access
- Customer Advisory Boards

CUSTOMER ZERO

Gather **Employee** feedback to enhance your products while fostering a product culture

USE CASES:

- Alpha Tests
- Dogfooding
- Employee Tests

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Enlist **Competitors' Customers** to rapidly gain actionable intel about their products

USE CASES:

- Competitive Intelligence
- Market Testing
- Comparative Research

GET STARTED FOR FREE OR SCHEDULE A LIVE DEMO TO LEARN MORE

SCHEDULE A DEMO

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WHY CENTERCODE?

Increase Revenue
½ ★ INCREASE
in product ratings

Release Sooner
50% FASTER
test cycles

Gain Participation
75% INCREASE
in tester engagement

Save Time
40% + DECREASE
in time managing tests